



Mercy Connect
Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan
January 2026 - December 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Connect respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their enduring connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

We recognise the deep spiritual and cultural significance of Country to First Nations peoples and acknowledge the ongoing impact of colonisation. Mercy Connect is committed to listening, learning, and walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as we strive to build respectful relationships and contribute meaningfully to reconciliation.

As an organisation grounded in compassion and inclusion, we honour the strength, resilience, and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge the importance of truth-telling, cultural safety, and shared responsibility in creating a future that embraces equity, justice, and healing for all.

Cover artwork: ‘Present’ by Tamara Murray

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A Message from our Chair and CEO



Charles Reis
Chair
Mercy Community Services
Australia Limited



Caroline Cummins
Chief Executive Officer
Mercy Connect

We are honoured to present our organisation's first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), a meaningful and foundational step in our journey toward reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As a Catholic not-for-profit organisation founded by the Sisters of Mercy, our mission has always been grounded in the values of dignity, compassion, justice and service. These values call us to walk alongside First Nations peoples with humility, respect, and a deep commitment to truth-telling and healing.

This Reflect RAP provides us with the opportunity to listen, to learn, and to begin building culturally safe and respectful relationships that honour the richness, strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It challenges us to reflect on our own practices and to ensure that reconciliation is not a statement of intent, but a lived and visible commitment embedded throughout our organisation.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise that First Nations peoples hold unique knowledge systems, spiritual connections to Country, and cultural traditions that continue to enrich our national identity and our communities.

This RAP marks the beginning of a longer journey, one that we are undertaking with purpose, guided by the Mercy tradition and the example of Catherine McAuley, who urged us to respond to need with courage and compassion.

We look forward to walking this path together, and to growing as a more inclusive, respectful and just organisation for all.



'Past' artwork by Tamara Murray



'Emerging' artwork by Tamara Murray

Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Mercy Connect to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Mercy Connect joins a network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with over 5.5 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Mercy Connect to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Mercy Connect, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

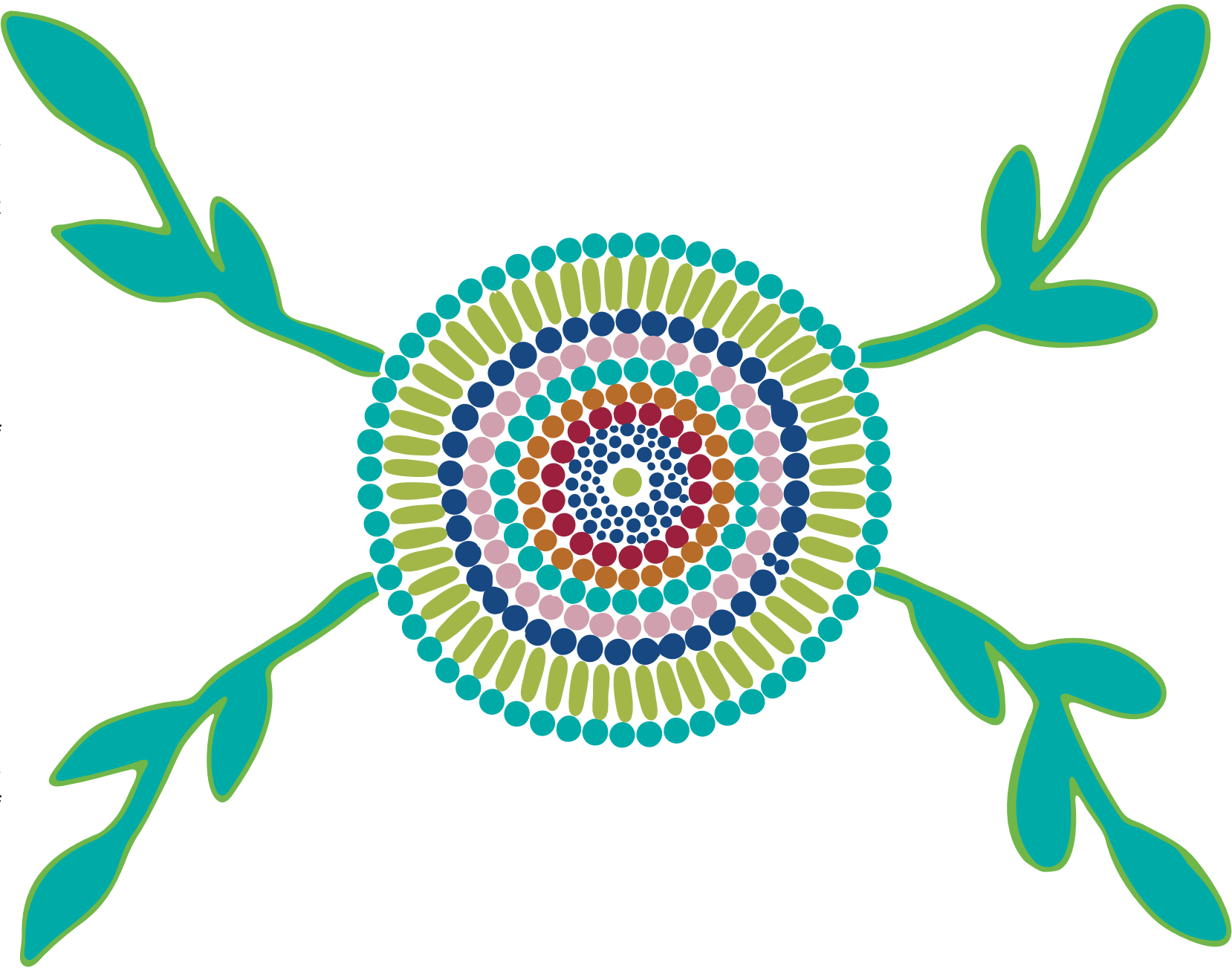
Our Vision

At Mercy Connect, our vision for reconciliation is a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are deeply respected, actively included, and genuinely empowered to live a fulfilling life. We aspire to a society where the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of First Nations peoples are not only acknowledged but celebrated as a vital part of our shared identity and national story.

As a trusted provider of disability services, we recognise that reconciliation is integral to our mission. We are committed to creating culturally safe, inclusive, and responsive supports that reflect the strengths and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This means embedding cultural understanding into our practices, policies, and relationships, ensuring that our services honour identity, promote dignity, and foster belonging. We also acknowledge the importance of cultural leadership and representation in shaping services that truly meet the needs of First Nations participants.

Through our Reflect RAP, we will deepen our relationships with First Nations communities, promote cultural learning across our organisation, and work in genuine partnership to remove barriers and build trust. We will listen with humility, learn with openness, and act with purpose to ensure that all participants, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are supported to thrive and reach their full potential. Our efforts will be guided by ongoing reflection, accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Guided by our values and purpose, we see reconciliation as both a responsibility and a powerful opportunity to create lasting, meaningful change. It is a journey of truth-telling, respect, and collaboration, one that strengthens our organisation and the communities we serve. By embracing this journey, we aim to contribute to a more just, inclusive, and compassionate Australia for all.



Our Business

Mercy Connect is a not-for-profit organisation committed to supporting individuals with disabilities across all stages of life. Our mission is to empower people to live independently and participate fully in their communities. Guided by the values of Compassion, Hospitality, Respect, Innovation, Teamwork, and Accountability, our work is deeply inspired by the legacy of Catherine McAuley and the ethos of the Sisters of Mercy.

We deliver a broad range of person-centred services, including in-home support, daily living skills development, supported independent living, and short-term accommodation. Our services are tailored to meet the needs of individuals young and old. At the heart of our approach is a commitment to listening to the voices of those we support, ensuring their goals and preferences shape the services they receive. We also place great importance on building strong partnerships that help us deliver holistic and responsive care.

Mercy Connect is proud to employ a dedicated team of 350 staff across our operations. As we continue our journey toward reconciliation, we are committed to deepening our understanding of the cultural diversity within our workforce. A key priority in our Reflect RAP is to identify and record the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in a culturally sensitive way. This important step will empower us to build meaningful strategies that foster a culturally safe, inclusive, and thriving workplace—where everyone feels seen, valued, and supported.

With two main corporate offices in Albury and Orange, our services are delivered across regional areas in the Riverina and Central West regions of New South Wales, as well as in Northeast Victoria. We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands on which we work, including the Wiradjuri people (Albury, Wagga Wagga, Young, Cowra, Bathurst, and Orange), the Dhudhuroa people (Wodonga), and the Bangarang people (Wangaratta).

Governed by Mercy Ministry Companions, Mercy Connect, along with other ministries across healthcare, aged care, community services and education, is supported to continue its work in meeting emerging needs and continue to flourish into the future.



Our RAP

We are committed to creating a workplace where respect, inclusion, and equity are at the heart of everything we do. Through this RAP, we aim to strengthen our understanding of, and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and work together to make a positive difference. Building on this commitment, Mercy Connect will take meaningful steps to embed cultural learning across our organisation, strengthen partnerships with First Nations peoples, and ensure our services reflect culturally safe and inclusive practices. This plan will guide us in building respectful partnerships, improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, staff, and stakeholders, and ensuring that reconciliation is an active and sustained part of our organisational values and operations.

Our RAP Champion is Caroline Cummins, Chief Executive Officer. Under her guidance, Mercy Connect established a RAP Working Group, which includes members from across our organisation from frontline staff to members of our executive team.

The RAP Working Group is enriched by the voices of First Nations members, ensuring our approach is grounded in meaningful representation and culturally informed practice.

Mercy Connect is at the beginning of its reconciliation journey. We've started taking meaningful steps toward cultural recognition and inclusion, such as incorporating Acknowledgement of Country in both online and in-person meetings and recognising and honouring dates of significance. As part of our reconciliation commitment, Mercy Connect engaged a First Nations artist to create original artworks for our RAP. These pieces visually represent our journey and celebrate the strength, diversity, and deep connection to Country of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Featured throughout the RAP and proudly displayed at our corporate office, the artworks help create culturally welcoming spaces and reinforce our dedication to truth-telling, respect and inclusion.





Artist message

Tamara Murray is a proud member of the Barkandji tribe originating from Coomealla, Lake Victoria, and the Mungo regions from her mother's ancestors. She also belongs to the Yorta Yorta and Dhudaroah tribes originating from the Shepparton area from her father's ancestors.

"Culture is everything to me, it's a way of life, it's my identity, it's who I represent - my people, my family. Culture is our way of healing, telling stories, keeping spirits and traditions alive. It's our connection to the land."

For Tamara, her art is not simply paint on a canvas. It's a story; it's a place; it's someone she has met along the way that has inspired her. It's a deep connection to the land and her culture. It is a story that has been passed down.

"I want my art to help break down barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. I hope I can help educate and contribute to a more peaceful world where our children can all walk as one, hand in hand, no matter their skin colour or cultural identity."

The gift of art came to her in the form of healing, giving her a voice, a way of expression and connection to the land, her culture and her ancestors.



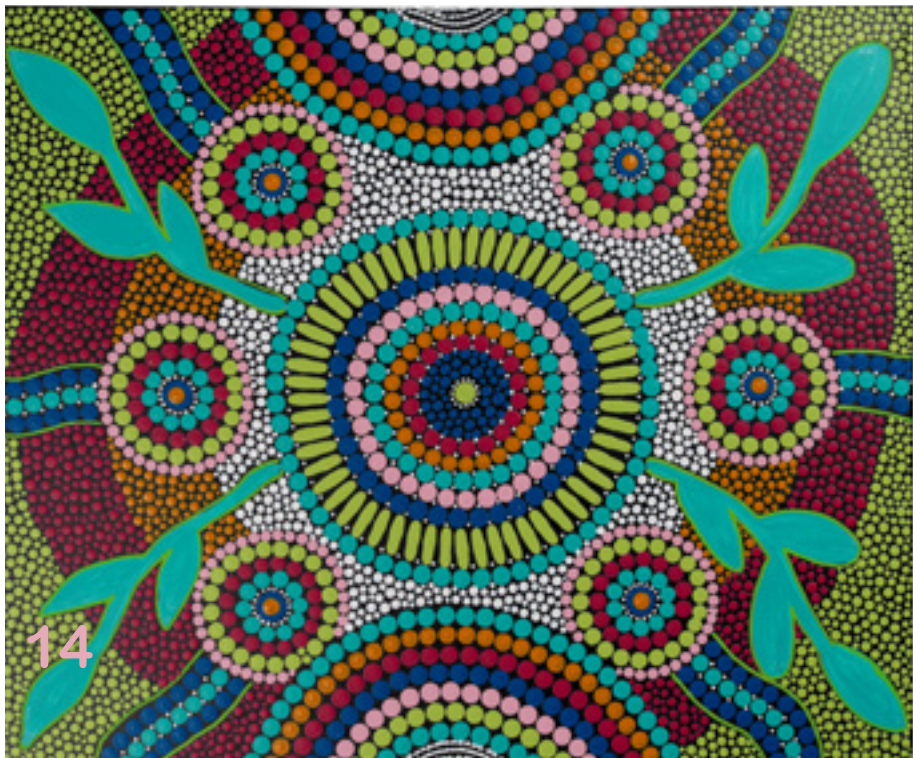
Tamara Murray
Artist

‘Spiritual Connections’



Past

This artwork pays tribute to the foundations of Mercy Connect. On the left, three crosses symbolise three founding Sisters of Mercy integral to Mercy Connect's story - Catherine McAuley, Mother Superior Ursula Frayne, and Mother M. Ignatius Murphy. These crosses are connected to a large central circle, representing the legacy of Mercy Connect's past. Radiating from this circle, white dots symbolise the enduring spirit of the Sisters, continuing to guide and inspire the organisation. Branches and leaves emerge, pointing towards the centre, illustrating strength and connection. Flowing lines extend outward, featuring three sets of dots Mercy Connect at the centre, with family and community on one side, and clients and participants on the other highlighting the interconnectedness that has shaped Mercy Connect from its inception.



Future

The future is depicted as a larger, more prominent central circle, symbolising expansion and greater presence. From this circle, wavy lines stretch outward to connect with smaller surrounding circles, each representing the communities, families, and individuals that Mercy Connect aspires to support. Branches and leaves continue to emerge from the central circle, reaffirming the enduring strength and connection that define the organisation. Encircling the design are white dots - echoes of the founding Sisters of Mercy - emphasising their lasting spiritual presence as Mercy Connect moves confidently into the future.

by Tamara Murray

Present

This piece captures the present state of Mercy Connect. Wavy lines representing Mercy Connect, family, and participants converge into a central, prominent circle - symbolising the organisation as it stands today. The colours within this circle reflect the core values that Mercy Connect embodies. The continued presence of branches and leaves signifies that strength and connection remain essential pillars of the organisation. These wavy lines extend forward, seamlessly linking the present with the future, showing an ongoing journey of growth and unity.



Emerging

The final piece represents a powerful vision of emergence - Mercy Connect stepping forward with recognition and leadership. Central circles multiply, symbolising the dynamic growth of communities and families nurtured by the organisation. These circles remain enveloped by the guiding spirit of the founding Sisters, represented by surrounding white dots. Wavy lines weave through the piece, representing Mercy Connect, along with its extended family, community, and participants, all moving forward together in unity and strength. This artwork captures the essence of an organisation rising with purpose, connection and a sense of enduring legacy.



Our Partnerships & Current Activities

Mercy Connect is committed to building meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Our journey toward reconciliation is grounded in respect, collaboration, and a desire to learn and grow together. We recognise that reconciliation is an ongoing process, and we are proud to highlight the partnerships and initiatives that reflect our commitment to this important work.

We have existing relationships with local First Nations organisations and are looking forward to strengthening these partnerships through the implementation of our first Reflect RAP. These partnerships include our involvement in the Koori Careers Fair - Woomera, which provides valuable networking opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and job seekers. We also work closely with Albury City Council, the Albury Aboriginal Lands Council, and the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service to foster inclusive and culturally safe environments across our services.

Since 2019, Mercy Connect has introduced initiatives that celebrate and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Our staff uniforms feature First Nations artwork of a Wiradjuri artist and are worn with pride. We actively participate in NAIDOC Week events in Albury and Orange, led by local Aboriginal Elders and featuring Cultural Ceremonies that bring staff and participants together in a spirit of recognition and respect.

Our support for First Nations participants extends beyond service delivery, we actively encourage and assist them in maintaining strong connections with their communities. This is a vital part of our person-centred approach and reflects our belief in the importance of cultural identity and belonging.

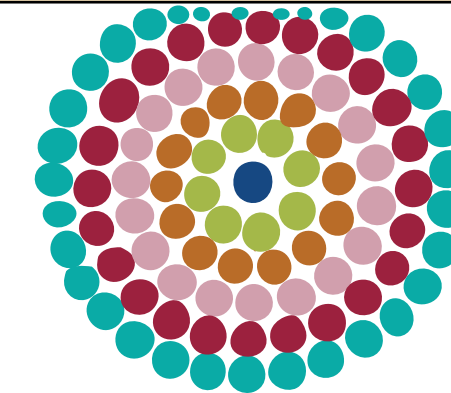
Alongside the work of our RAP Working Group, Mercy Connect also contributes to broader reconciliation efforts through active participation in the Reconciliation Committee, a sub-committee of the Mercy Community Services Australia Ltd (MCSAL) Board. This committee plays a strategic role in guiding our reconciliation priorities and ensuring they remain central to our organisational values and practices. Together, the RAP Working Group and Reconciliation Committee help align our local actions with broader systemic change.

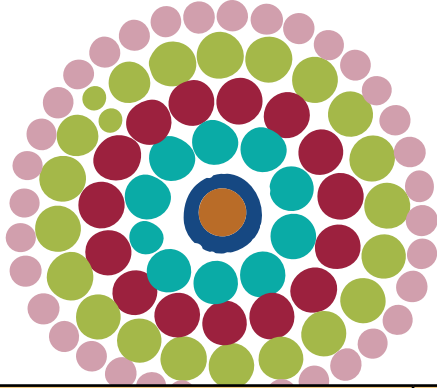




Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	March 2026	Chief Participant Experience & Practice Officer
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	March 2026	Chief Participant Experience & Practice Officer
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May (annually)	Executive Leader People & Communications
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June (annually)	Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: RAP Working Group Chair
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June (annually)	Chief Executive Officer





3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Continue to share our ongoing commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	January 2026	Chief Executive Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	May 2026	Chief Participant Experience & Practice Officer
	Identify other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2026	Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: RAP Working Group Chair
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2026	Executive Leader People & Communications
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2026	Executive Leader People & Communications





Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	June 2026	Chief Participant Experience & Practice Officer
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	July 2026	Lead: Executive Leader People & Communications Support: Organisational Development Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	May 2026	Lead: Chief Participant Experience & Practice Officer Support: RAP Working Group Chair
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2026	Lead: Executive Leader People & Communications Support: RAP Working Group Chair
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	First week of July (annually) First Week of October (annually) in Orange.	Lead: Executive Leader People & Communications Support: RAP Working Group Chair
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	First week of July (annually) First Week of October (annually) in Orange.	Lead: Executive Leader People & Communications Support: Marketing & Communications Officer
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week of July (annually) First Week of October (annually) in Orange.	Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: RAP Working Group Chair



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	October 2026	Lead: Chief Executive Officer Support: Executive Leader People & Communications
	Review Terms of Reference for the RWG.	October 2026	Lead: RAP Working Group Chair Support: Executive Leader People & Communications
	Review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	October 2026	Lead: RAP Working Group Chair Support: Executive Leader People & Communications
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	January 2026	Chief Executive Officer
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	January 2026	Chief Executive Officer
	Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	October 2026	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	January 2026	Chief Participant Experience & Practice Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	January annually	Executive Leader People & Communications
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	September annually	Executive Leader People & Communications
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September annually	Executive Leader People & Communications
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	October 2026	Executive Leader People & Communications

Photos and Artworks

- Page 1** *Barkandji Artist Tamara Murray's artwork 'Present'.*
- Page 2** *Mercy Connect participant Daniel Quinn pictured in the gardens at Mercy Connect Head Office and Artist Tamara Murray's artwork 'Future'.*
- Page 3** *A detail from 'Future' by Tamara Murray.*
- Page 4** *Mercy Community Services Australia Limited Board Chair Charles Reis & Mercy Connect CEO Caroline Cummins.*
- Page 5** *Barkandji Artist Tamara Murray's artwork 'Past'.*
- Page 6** *Barkandji Artist Tamara Murray's artwork 'Emerging'.*
- Page 7** *Reconciliation Australia CEO, Karen Mundine.*
- Page 10** *Mercy Connect participants enjoying a walk; staff preparing a BBQ during Day Program; Daniel Quinn at a NAIDOC Week workshop; Gareth Evans unveiling Spiritual Connections at a Reconciliation Week event.*
- Page 12** *'Spiritual Connections' collection displayed at a Mercy Connect Reconciliation Week Event.*
- Page 13** *Barkandji Artist Tamara Murray - signing her artwork.*
- Page 14** *'Spiritual Connections' by Artist Tamara Murray's artwork 'Past' & 'Future'.*
- Page 15** *'Spiritual Connections' by Artist Tamara Murray's artwork 'Present' & 'Emerging'.*
- Page 17** *Aunty Ruth pictured running a workshop for Mercy Connect during NAIDOC week, Mercy Connect Staff unveiling 'Spiritual Connecitons' replicas in Orange NSW and Mercy Connect staff on the stall table at the Albury Wodonga Koori Careers expo.*
- Page 18** *Mercy Connect staff member and participant walking hand-in-hand through a local park.*
- Page 21** *Mercy Connect staff member and participant entering a local park during Community Inclusion activities.*
- Page 23** *Mercy Connect Head Office, with a rainbow arching above the building.*
- Page 25** *Mercy Connect Staff Member Kylie Orell showcasing our Behaviour Support Services.*

Contact Us

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